

A JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

Vol. III, No. 4 Address communications to J. L. Clifford
Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Penna.

Sept., 1943

NO 1943 NATIONAL MLA MEETING

The Executive Council of the society, meeting in New York on Sept. 18-19, made the following decisions: first that there will be no national meeting this year; second that a Program of Section and Group papers, with short abstracts of the contents of each paper, will be issued in December; and third that members are free to organize local meetings on their own initiative.

As the Chairman of Group VIII, your editor believes that it will scarcely be feasible to arrange any local gatherings exclusively of 18th century enthusiasts, but that we will gladly cooperate with any other groups who wish to arrange some sort of a get-together.

As a sample of what a local meeting might accomplish you are referred to that held at Western Reserve in 1942 (See Supplement, page 1838). Will any of our readers who wish to help organize such a sectional meeting please let us know so that the news may be passed on to others in our next issue?

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THE HYPHEN WAR

Amusingly enough, we have had more replies to our query about the possible use of a hyphen in "News Letter" than to any of our more literary problems. Indeed, almost everyone seems to have some idea about the matter, though unfortunately for your editor there is no agreement at all. Many argue cogently for the hyphen, while as many offer evidence for retaining the heading as it is. And so, since editors are notoriously conservative, we continue to defy Rudolf Kirk and his supporters.

Kirk, to be sure, has refused to put up a very strenuous fight, but others continue to support the cause. For example, A. Lloyd Jones, the Hon. Treasurer of the London Johnson Society, writes: "I notice my edition of Chambers's Dictionary prints Newsletter as one word with no break at all. As Johnson used a hyphen for news-paper and other words which you quote, we may perhaps conclude that he would have hyphenated News-Letter."

W. H. Bonner (Buffalo) adds: "I am inclined to think Rudolf Kirk is right. We have another example from the eighteenth century, in the Boston News-Letter. To follow the analogy of 'news-paper', should not Johnsonian News Letter be News-Letter if we wish an eighteenth century flavor and Newsletter if we want it modern? I vote for the former."

On the other side of the fence, however, we have a vigorous (as always) rejoinder from J. R. Moore (Indiana). He writes: "You will no doubt wish to conform to actual 18th century usage. This is to be found not in dictionaries but in the titles of news letters actually circulated. Those which Johnson knew in his youth and early manhood were certainly issued with two words and no hyphen for news letter."

"No doubt news-letter as a common noun was occasionally hyphenated, as it is said to have been by Swift in 1724; I think I can offer examples considerably earlier than that. But the essential fact is that although news-book as a title was customarily hyphenated, news letter as a title was written as two words."

"This can hastily be checked by reference to CBEL, where modern titles are invariably given as news-

letter or newsletter, 18th century forms (except in one erroneous record of a title) as news letter.

"Apparently it cannot be shown that Johnson ever wrote anything but news letter; if he did, he went counter to the journalistic practice of his own time."

In a later letter, nevertheless, Moore is forced to admit that Defoe in the Review seems to have used both forms, and the evidence is not conclusive as to which he preferred. For instance, he uses the two words without hyphen in I, 119; II, 278; IV, 185; VI, 453; VIII, 7; IX, 184. The hyphen is certainly used in I, 264; II, 379; III, 547; IV, 365, 373, 388, 430; VI, 299, 542; VIII, 708. There is also the evidence that Defoe often used either News or Letter alone, when referring to a title (Dyer's News or Dyer's Letter).

Moore thus concludes: "The figures are not very conclusive, after all, but they prove my main point: that although news-writer and newspaper were almost (not quite) invariable forms in practice, a seasoned journalist like Defoe thought of news letter as being in a different category — to be hyphenated or written without a hyphen just as he happened to please, or still better, to be separated and used half at a time."

Don Stauffer (Princeton), however, gives the most amusing reason for leaving out the hyphen on the masthead, as he puts it, "solely on the non-historical-contemporary-propagandistic grounds that heavily-excessive hyphenization, though logical, will force our language into monumentally-ponderous German-compound-monstrosities."

So there we are! Unless further convinced on the other side, we stand pat.

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THE LATEST NEW RAMBLER

The fourth number of the mimeographed publication which is being issued by the Johnson Society of London was almost ready at the time

of death of Frederick Vernon, Hon. Secretary. Pending receipt of the MSS from his executors, the Society has issued what is called a Supplement — now edited by William Kent and A. Lloyd-Jones. The price per issue is one shilling, and we are sure that additional subscriptions from the United States will be welcomed. (Send communications to A. Lloyd-Jones Esq., 102 Gordon Rd., Ealing, London W.13).

Included in the contents of the July Supplement are: Obituary notices for Mr. Frederick Vernon and Mr. H. W. Bromhead; "Mr. Walter G. Bell, F.S.A." by W. Kent; "Eleven Questions on Dr. Johnson" by The Rev. R. Park; "Mrs. James Boswell" by W. G. Graham; and "Varia" by N. Q.

Various bits of news culled from this New Rambler will be found elsewhere in these pages. It is hoped that continued cooperation between our two groups an even greater friendly spirit between British and American Johnsonians can be developed. After all, must we not keep our friendships in constant repair?

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The London Johnson Society continues to hold regular meetings. Because of war conditions the gatherings are held in the afternoon, but we are interested to note that good refreshment is provided at an inclusive charge of one shilling per person, "those participating providing their own tea and sugar." Mr. Hawkins (Verger of St. Clement Danes) and Mrs. Hawkins attend to the catering and waiting and see that everyone is well looked after.

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Willard Connely, author of several popular 18th century biographies, has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

DR. JOHNSON AS DETECTIVE

If you are a Johnsonian purist — if you violently dislike the use of the Great Cham in fiction — if the mere thought of Johnson in the company of Hercule Poirot, Perry Mason, and Philo Vance, using the little brain cells to solve a crime, makes you shudder and cringe — then stop reading this column at once. Skip on quickly to the next page.

But if, on the other hand, you don't mind a little "spoofing" of the great man — if you will not flinch at some slight fictional twisting of historical facts — if you won't faint at the idea of Dr. Johnson being transferred to the gumshoe squad — go out to the nearest news-stand and buy a copy of the November issue of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. In it you will find a story by one of our subscribers, Lillian de la Torre (Mrs. George McCue, Colorado College), entitled "Dr. Sam: Johnson, Detector."

In this story we find Johnson solving the mystery of the theft of the Great Seal of England in March, 1784, with Boswell, acting as his Dr. Watson, revealing all the inside details of the crime. But don't jump to the conclusion that too much violence is done to the dignity of the Sage of Fleet Street. He is not, as one of our correspondents feared, described as "crawling on his ballooning belly along a narrow passageway, keen, darting eyes alert for the slightest bloodstain." Nor do we find him "pulling on a fore-and-aft cap over his dirty wig, slipping a magnifying glass in his pocket, crying 'Come, Boswell, the game's afoot!', and slipping into the London fog."

No indeed, the Johnson of the story is the sick old man of seventy-four, confined to his house by illness, but still vigorous in intellect and able to use his sturdy common sense in arriving at the truth behind a set of puzzling circumstances. In fact,

he is not a caricature of the real Johnson, though some readers may find his conversation a bit innocuous, and his claws clipped, if anything, a little too severely. But we will not stress that point. Perhaps some of the rest of you will have other criticisms or comments. If so write them to Mrs. McCue at 1134 E. High St., Colorado Springs. And if you have any suggestions of other 18th century mysteries which Johnson might be made to solve send them on to the author or to the Magazine.

MEMBERS IN SERVICE

Don Stauffer (Princeton) writes from the Marine Corps Air Station at Mojave, California: "My life in the Marines makes me endorse again Dr. Johnson's 'Sir, there is nothing which I would not rather know than not know.'" He is indeed a rock of ages.

"The Marines are a fine outfit, with incredible spirit. I'm in Aviation as Group Air Combat Intelligence Officer. The work is fascinating, and we hope to go over soon. Few of us will think of our new habitats as the Conrad or Kipling country, or even the Somerset Maugham, Pearl Buck, or (eventually) Lafcadio Hearn country. In wartime, I think that's no great loss — almost a kind of blessed sabbatical."

Curt Zimansky writes from Camp Howe, Texas: "The last copy of the News Letter to reach me had so many cancellations of address on it that someone had kindly to enclose it in another envelope..."

"In the course of working my way from sergeant to lieutenant this year I have had three permanent changes of station and innumerable temporary ones. I am at the moment assigned to Camp Ritchie, Maryland, a refuge for more than one academician caught up by the retrograde wheels of civilization."

The latest address we have for George P. Winship Jr is 115th Rad. Int. Co., Presidio of San Francisco, Calif. He writes: "I still welcome the News-Letter (I should say, use a hyphen), but I'm farther from 18th century journalism than ever, in a desk job in the signal corps."

Herbert W. Starr is in Battery C, Second Coast Artillery, Fort Monroe, Va. He comments: "You asked me where I am and what I am doing — well, at present I am in an anti-aircraft battery and somewhat dazed to discover that I am classed as a Technician 5th Grade — telephone linesman. Just how or when I became a telephone linesman I can't tell you, for that I haven't found out myself."

Homer Caskey, on last report, is still stationed at the Chemical Warfare School at the Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland.

Claude E. Jones, who is now a lieutenant in the Naval Reserve, may be reached at Headquarters, 11 N.D. San Diego, Calif.

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AN 18TH CENTURY QUESTIONNAIRE?

In the recent issue of the New Rambler there is included an interesting set of questions, some rather difficult, on Dr. Johnson. The answers are to appear in the next issue.

Your editor wonders if some of our own readers won't take the hint and draft some ingenious questionnaires for future numbers of the Johnsonian News Letter. Match your wits against those of your colleagues, and let us all have some fun.

Moreover, puzzles are certainly not out of place in our modern world. Perhaps some of you may not have heard of the letter which the

Poet Laureate John Masefield recently wrote to the London Times to thank the newspaper for its crossword puzzles.

For a good many years, Masefield wrote, puzzles had been the only things in any paper that gave him and his wife any solace. "Dr. Johnson", he added, "whose virtuous life you would have lengthened would have praised you fittingly in some such words as these: 'You seldom move either pity or terror, but you often elevate the sentiments; you seldom pierce the breast but always delight and often improve the understanding.'"

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DID JOHNSON USE SNUFF?

"Do not bother very much about when Dr. Johnson went down to Lichfield or how often he spilled snuff on his waistcoat." So said the late G. K. Chesterton in his speech at the annual dinner of the London Johnson Society in 1932. But, a writer in the New Rambler asks, what evidence is there that Johnson was an habitual user of snuff?

Won't one of our acute investigators provide the answer to this question?

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NEWS OF MEMBERS

Dixon Wecter (U.C.L.A.) has been made a Research Associate of the Henry E. Huntington Library, and will divide his time between teaching and work at the library.

Ernest Mossner is working with the Committee on War Records, Bureau of the Budget, connected with the Executive Office of the President in Washington, D.C. He writes that his work is partly administrative analysis and partly history. His wife, Carolyn, is now in England, attached to the 1st WAC Separate Battalion assigned to the 8th Army Air Corps.

AUCTION SALES

Recently we were lamenting that increased teaching schedules, the difficulties of travel, higher taxes, all combined to make it almost impossible to keep up with the auction sales of 18th century manuscripts and rare books held at the Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York. As a result, we had not been able to keep up one department of this News Letter — promised to subscribers in our early issues.

Now Arthur Swann of the Parke-Bernet Galleries comes to our rescue with a grand suggestion. He has promised to put us on his mailing list for press releases concerning important items in the coming sales. Thus we will know some time in advance of the chief rarities to come up for sale, and this information we hope to pass on to you as best we can. Of course the fact that our News Letter appears only every six or eight weeks makes it impossible always to get the news to you before the actual sale, but much of the time it can be done. Anyway, a thousand thanks to Swann for his friendly help.

From the first set of releases we cull the following:

Sale Monday and Tuesday afternoons, October 4 & 5, mostly concerned with French literature and Americana. Included are some fine sets of 18th century French authors.

Sale Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, October 12 and 13, the Alexander Biddle Papers, Part II. This is one of the most important sales of 18th century American manuscripts in some time. In order to make final distribution among the residuary legatees of the estate of Alexander Biddle, who died in 1898, this collection of letters and family papers, long held in bank vaults, is at last being sold.

Preeminent in the collection is the original autograph manuscript journal of Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and an intimate of many celebrated men of his time. A large portion of this manuscript remains entire-

ly unpublished, because of the number of pages skipped in the transcription and printing, with other large portions canceled. In this journal Rush describes many distinguished Americans and contemporary events, and the final sale of the original document is an event of the utmost importance.

Included among the autograph letters is a long series from John Adams, a number from Benjamin Franklin, and others written by Jefferson, John Paul Jones, Charles Lee, Tom Paine, George Washington etc.

These documents will be on exhibition at the Galleries after Thursday, October 7.

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HORACE WALPOLE: GARDENIST

The summer of 1943 will probably go down into history as the high point of amateur gardening. Not many of us have, we suspect, escaped the Victory Garden mania. The scholar's eye for textual variants or canceled passages has been focused on rows of radishes, beans and corn. But glancing out the window at our own not too well cultivated and weeded plot, we stop to wonder how accurately a man's garden may reveal his true temperament.

Are neat rows of vegetables and well-staked tomatoes any sign of scholarly exactitude? (For our own sake we fervently hope the converse is not true) Or to carry the speculation further --- is a person's taste in flowers and laying out a garden any sure revelation of his critical attitude toward life? Will a classicist or a sentimentalist show his inclination in the design and planting of his yard?

Why these wandering reflections? The answer is that your editor has just finished reading an excellent new book by Isabel Chase -- Horace Walpole: Gardenist, and, as is the way with scholars, his mind has wandered off into bypaths. Not that the book has anything to do with the practical problems of planting a modern garden. Far from

it! Its theme is the development of taste in landscaping during the 18th century — the gradual change from classic formalism to romantic irregularity. At the beginning Isabel Chase gives a careful scholarly reprint of Walpole's The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening, and then provides a thorough discussion of the background and sources of his ideas. Certainly every student of 18th century thought will want to read her analysis of the changing aesthetic tastes of the day, as evidenced by the theories of landscaping.

But we are wandering away from our digression. If the famous designers of the mid-century represent what we call romantic tendencies in their insistence on irregularity, is it possible to tell from each estate or garden the inner critical attitude of its planner? Remember that Pope was what we would call romantic in his gardening at Twickenham, and Addison turned toward naturalism. On the other hand, Scott led a revival of formalism.

Are such tastes, then, as important as literary productions in determining the real man? If so, might we not benefit by more information about the gardens of other famous creative artists of the past? What do you think?

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RECENT ARTICLES

Occasionally, we believe, it may prove useful to mention interesting and important articles which chance to appear in periodicals not normally seen by the average 18th century scholar. Moreover, we hope our readers will let us know of any of a similar nature which we may overlook.

As a sample, we have been intending to mention Charles G. Osgood's article "Lady Phillipina Knight and Her Boswell", which was printed in the Princeton University Library Chronicle, IV (Feb.-Apr.,

1943) 37-49. Osgood describes a copy of the first edition of Boswell's Life, now in the Princeton Library, which contains numerous marginal annotations, thought to be in the hand of Lady Phillipina Knight, once the intimate friend of Frances Reynolds and others of the Johnson circle. Her anecdotes and reminiscences concerning Johnson and his contemporaries are of real importance to students of the period, and we welcome Osgood's account of them.

Another article which may have escaped your notice is Maurice J. Quinlan's "William Cowper and the Unpardonable Sin", which appeared in The Journal of Religion, XXIII (April, 1943) 110-16. Here Quinlan makes the point that Cowper's tragedy was essentially due to a "mind diseased, and there seems to be no reason for ascribing it to his association with the Evangelicals."

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Dick Boys (Mich.) has issued a mimeographed preliminary list of poetical miscellanies added to Case's Bibliography. With it he has also sent out a short-title list of miscellanies added by microfilm to the Univ. of Mich. library,

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We have received from England a dramatic account of the rediscovery of the crypt of Dr. Johnson's old church, St. Clement Danes. Unfortunately, the story as told by E. A. Young is too long to include in this present issue of the News Letter, but we will save it for a future number.

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Frod Pottle (Yale) has recently been elected a Vice-President of the Johnson Society of London.